

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**Kurdish union leader: Workers
faced years of tyranny, war**
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 83/NO. 19 MAY 13, 2019

NY Workers Memorial Day: No one needs to die on the job

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS
AND JANET POST

NEW YORK — “I’m going to fall!” 51-year-old Nelson Salinas yelled as he clung to a scaffold suspended seven stories high against a building in midtown Manhattan April 8. He had been hit in the head by a falling stone pried loose from the top of the building while work was being done to restore it. Salinas was rescued but died in the hospital shortly afterwards. He had worked in construction for 20 years.

Salinas’ death and that of two other construction workers here that week, aren’t “accidents,” but the result of the bosses’ relentless drive for profits. Companies and contractors have increasingly pushed unions out of more and more sites, pressuring workers to go harder and faster. This means rising deaths and injuries on the job.

As the Workers Memorial Day mass here showed, most of those paying with their lives for the bosses’ profit drive are

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US hands off Venezuela! US hands off Cuba!

Washington steps up its war threats, as coup attempt fails



Reuters/Alexandre Meneghini

Hundreds of thousands of people march during May Day rally in Havana to protest U.S. threats. Banner says, “Unity, Commitment and Victory.”

BY SETH GALINSKY

In the aftermath of a failed U.S.-backed coup in Venezuela, packaged as an “uprising” by pro-imperialist opposition figure Juan Guaidó, Washington is stepping up threats against revolutionary Cuba. The Socialist Workers

Party has issued a call to action, urging working people to organize and join in protests, forums and other actions demanding U.S. hands off Venezuela! U.S. hands off Cuba!

**CALL TO ACTION:
OPPOSE US MOVES**
— SWP statement page 8

Guaidó’s April 30 move to oust Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was his most provocative action yet. The self-declared “acting president” showed up outside a military base in Caracas, accompanied by a small group of National Guard defectors,

and called on army officials to overthrow the government.

Guaidó and U.S. officials spread rumors that high-ranking military officials had agreed to back a coup. But the attempt fell flat after a short exchange of fire. Several leading officers rumored

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May 1 actions demand driver’s licenses, amnesty for immigrants



Militant/Seth Galinsky

Marchers in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, chanted “Licenses yes, promises no” on May Day. Handmade signs were everywhere. For many it was their first time joining a protest action.

BY LEA SHERMAN

PERTH AMBOY, N.J. — More than 250 people from across the state — including construction, restaurant and factory workers and small-business people — marched here May 1 to demand driver’s licenses for undocumented immigrants. Sponsored by Cosecha, it was one of many May Day actions across the country.

U.S. capitalists use immigrant labor to lower all workers’ wages — using undocumented status to slash their

pay and then going after all others — and boost profits. Fighting for amnesty is key to unify the labor movement.

“I decided I had to do something,” said one young worker, who didn’t want to give her name. It was her first protest ever. Drivers without licenses, face steep fines, jail and even deportation.

The demand for driver’s licenses for all was at the center of many of the actions nationwide. The *Militant* will have more coverage next week.

Join the fight to overturn Florida prison censorship of the ‘Militant’

BY SETH GALINSKY

After months of noninterference, Florida prison authorities have banned three issues of the *Militant* since April 12, violating the constitutional rights of both the socialist newsweekly and its readers behind bars.

The jailers falsely charged that each of the issues “encourages activities which may lead to the use of physical violence or group disruption” or “otherwise presents a threat to the security, good order, or discipline” of the prison.

For issue no. 12, they cite an article on protests against the acquittal of the cop who shot and killed 22-year-old Stephon Clark in Sacramento, California, last March. For issue no. 15 they point to an article about the speaking tour of Albert Woodfox, who spent nearly 44 years in

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As Beijing and Washington talk trade deal, rivalry deepens

BY ROY LANDERSEN

For over a year, punishing tariffs by Washington, and Beijing’s tit-for-tat levies on U.S. products have roiled world trade. Now talks between the two governments point to a possible accommodation reflecting the relationship of forces between the two powers, at least for now.

The U.S. rulers are trying to stave off a growing challenge from Beijing’s expanding capitalist economy alongside advances in its political and military power in Asia and beyond.

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Northern New Jersey/New York
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**US hands off
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US hands off Cuba!**
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New York [Manhattan]

For similar forums in other cities
see www.themilitant.com

Speakout protests Beijing’s repression of Uighur people

BY EDWIN FRUIT

REDMOND, Wash. — “We are not an ethnic minority but an independent people with a long history. The Chinese government is attempting to wipe this out,” Duke University student Aydin Anwar told a speakout at the Muslim Association of Puget Sound here April 19.

Close to 100 people attended the event, which was called to oppose the oppression of the Uighur people by Chinese authorities. Uighurs are a Turkic-speaking, largely Muslim people who live in a region they call East Turkistan. Chinese authorities refer to the area as Xinjiang, a huge expanse of northwest China bordering Central Asia.

“We are calling for an end to the concentration camps,” said Anwar, an activist in the East Turkistan National Awakening organization, and for “the right to practice our religion, wear traditional clothing and to speak our languages.”

She described how the Chinese government attempts to erase any national or cultural identity for the Uighurs. They can be jailed for using East Turkistan as the name of their homeland or displaying the region’s traditional flag. To bolster their domination of East Turkistan the Chinese government fostered the immigration of Han Chinese into the region. Today they comprise 40% of the population there.

Anwar described how the Chinese government has organized the indefinite detention of over a million Uighurs in “vocational centers” — in reality concentration camps. Uighurs

are forced to undergo indoctrination sessions, sing hymns praising the Chinese Communist Party and write essays of self-criticism. Learning Mandarin is mandatory. They’re forbidden to fast during Ramadan. Solitary confinement, beatings and torture are used to try to break those who buck the authoritarian rules.

Fight for independence

Anwar described how the Uighur people established an East Turkistan Republic in 1944, as Japanese colonial rule in China was overturned. This republic was then overthrown after the 1949 Chinese Revolution by the newly established Chinese government led by Mao Zedong.

In the discussion period, other Uighurs explained how they are prevented from communicating with relatives in China and fear what will be done to their family members there if they speak out here against the Chinese government’s repression.

Anwar described how Beijing has stepped up surveillance of Uighurs, placing cameras everywhere across Xinjiang. In some cases Uighur families are forced to have Chinese minders live with them.

She also reported that leading Uighur public figures and supporters of independence have recently been “disappeared” for opposing Beijing’s repressive measures. These include the former president of the University of Xinjiang, sentenced to death for “separatist tendencies,” and Ilham Tohti, a writer and professor who was sentenced to life in prison.

New Zealand picket defends women’s right to abortion



Militant/Felicity Coggan

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Supporters of a woman’s right to choose abortion were welcomed by passersby April 13 as they picketed in defense of the Auckland Medical Aid Centre here, which provides abortion. The picket was the third in a series organized by Auckland Feminist Action to counter “Forty Days for Life” anti-abortion actions organized annually at the clinic.

“Abortion is a medical procedure that should be safe and readily available,” 22-year-old engineering student Melanie Duff told Communist League members at the protest. “If it’s hard to get, that doesn’t stop people getting abortions. It just makes them more unsafe.”

In New Zealand abortion is deemed illegal under the Crimes Act unless a series of criteria are met. Women must satisfy two doctors — “certifying consultants” — that they are legally qualified to have the procedure. The vast majority of abortions that are permitted are on grounds that continuation of the pregnancy would endanger the woman’s mental health.

A report commissioned by the Labour-led coalition government last October proposed repeal of criminal offenses for abortion, a move promised by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in the party’s 2017 election campaign. But her government hasn’t introduced the legislation.

“Abortion should be like any other medical procedure,” Duff said. “Women should be able to go to their family doctor, rather than having to convince the provider that they are mentally or physically unfit. It’s demeaning to women.”

— FELICITY COGGAN

Supporters of the Chinese rulers have attempted to silence those who speak out in the U.S. in support of their national rights. When Uighurs and their supporters organized a protest at Duke University, counterprotesters tried to break up their action, claiming participants were “Islamic extremists.”

Xinjiang is important to the Chinese capitalists as well as to the state. It has rich deposits of oil, coal and natural gas. And it is located alongside the path of the Chinese rulers’ Belt and Road Initiative, a series of vast infrastructure projects aimed at advancing Chinese capitalists’ fight

for markets and expanding their sway across Asia and elsewhere.

Because of this, “the Muslim-majority countries, every one of them has remained silent,” about the conditions Uighurs face, Anwar said. “They all have deals with China.”

“My family members are Uighur-American activists and we’ve made the decision to speak out because it is silence on the issue that is killing Uighurs,” Anwar told *Militant* reporters at the Redmond event. “There is no turning back.”

Mary Martin contributed to this article.

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THE MILITANT

End US economic war against people of Cuba!

Last month Washington imposed new sanctions on Cuba. The U.S. rulers have never forgiven workers and farmers there for making a socialist revolution and providing an example to working people worldwide. The ‘Militant’ covers the fight to end the U.S. rulers’ embargo.



Juvenal Balán

May Day action in Havana, May 1, 2018.

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'Fight for workers control on the job'

BY TERRY EVANS

"Hospital nurses are given responsibility for too many patients and then face losing their license if they make a mistake," Kathleen Kelly told Candace Wagner, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New Jersey General Assembly, and socialist campaigner Jenny King when they knocked on her door in Tom's River township to introduce the party and its program. Kelly works as a private home nurse.

"I work on the railroad. The bosses there are shortening training periods and cutting crew sizes," Wagner replied. "It's the same thing all over." The SWP campaign explains the capitalist bosses are driven by competition for markets and profits to try to force workers to work ever harder and faster, with utter disregard for our safety. Workers need to organize and use union power to fight for workers control over production. This is the only road to enforce health and safety, to halt pollution and the making of dangerously flawed products like the Boeing 737 MAX.

The SWP and sister Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom are on a seven-week drive to expand the reach of the *Militant* and books by revolutionaries, as well as raise \$115,000 for the paper. The goal of the effort is to help the party systematically reach out in towns, cities and rural areas to meet and develop ongoing political collaboration with working people.

Wagner explained she was building May Day actions demanding driver's licenses for immigrants. Kelly said, "It was hard for me to get a license! You need six forms of ID. Why should they get a license just like that?"

"Requiring all these forms of ID is bad for *all* workers," Wagner said. "The SWP calls for amnesty for the 11 million people in the U.S. without documents. It's a way to unite working people so we

can fight together against the impact of the crisis we all face." Kelly described the challenges confronting immigrant workers she looks after as they try to get health care they need and can afford.

"I still haven't made up my mind about driver's licenses, but I'm against the deportation of immigrants. I'd like to come to the May Day rally," Kelly said. She got a *Militant* subscription and three books on working-class politics. Party members are offering books by party leaders and other revolutionaries worldwide at 20% off as part of the drive.

David Clos-Sasseville met Communist League members Katy LeRougetel and Joe Young when they knocked on his door in Villeray, Montreal, April 21. He said he opposed the Quebec government's moves to ban the wearing of religious symbols at work by many government workers.

"The unions should be campaigning on this, to unite workers against the proposal," Young said, explaining that the government is seeking to divide working people and scapegoat Muslims and immigrants to divert us from seeing that capitalism is our common enemy.

"The problem with the unions is they

only act on specifics related to workers' immediate conditions, instead of organizing broadly," Clos-Sasseville said.

"That's it!" he exclaimed when Young showed him *Tribunes of the People and the Trade Unions*. The new book explains why organizing to strengthen the unions is essential and why a "tribune of the people" uses every aspect of capitalist oppression to explain that working people are capable of transforming themselves in struggle and building a movement that can take power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers. Clos-Sasseville got the title and a *Militant* subscription.

In his introduction to the book, SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes says that books by revolutionaries "place us in *history*, along the line of march of working people around the globe."

To find out more about the books, the *Militant* and the SWP, or to join in the effort, contact the branch nearest you listed on page 8.



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Joel Britton, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of San Francisco, talks to Tayler Jones at her door in Oakland, California, April 27. Jones, a graduate student, got a subscription to the *Militant*.

The 'Militant' has always been financed by its readers

BY TERRY EVANS

A great response by readers this week brought in over \$20,000 to the Militant Fighting Fund, putting the total collected at \$43,834, with a further \$2,321 in the mail. This bodes well for the financing of the *Militant*, a big step toward meeting the \$115,000 goal by May 28.

Since the *Militant* began publishing over 90 years ago it has had only one source of financing — its working-class readership.

The first issue of the paper in November 1928 was put out by communists before they even knew how they were going to finance it, when they were expelled from the Communist Party for fighting to continue the revolutionary course of V.I. Lenin and the Bolshevik Party against the growing Stalinization of the CP. They realized getting the *Militant* published was a political necessity.

An appeal to the *Militant*'s readership in 1933 ensured it was possible to make an unprecedented move to publish the paper three times a week, in response to the looming showdown in Germany, as Hitler's fascists sought to seize power. "We have undertaken this great task," wrote James P. Cannon, the SWP's long-standing national secretary, in the Feb. 20 issue, "without any resources except our confidence that you and other Communist workers will support our initiative with your solidarity and financial aid."

As the U.S. rulers stepped up their preparations to enter the Second World War in 1939, the *Socialist Appeal*, as the *Mili-*

tant was then named, also appeared three times a week to respond to the widespread interest in a working-class voice in opposition to the imperialist slaughter being prepared by the U.S. rulers. Contributions from readers funded that effort, too.

As the rulers intensified their patriotic fervor heading into the war, supporters of the *Socialist Appeal* from Detroit wrote in the July 6, 1940, issue, "The house-to-house campaign is still going on. One would think that the present barrage of war-propaganda ... would effect this method of distribution [of the *Appeal*] and money-raising. Fortunately no such thing is the case." Those they spoke with on their doorsteps "treat us ... generously with finances."

Decades later the *Militant* was targeted in a harassment lawsuit by coal bosses at C.W. Mining in 2004, as a result of the paper's backing of a 10-month strike by 75 coal miners at

the Co-Op mine in Utah. The paper organized the Militant Fighting Fund, gaining endorsements and financial contributions widely in the labor movement, that helped push back the bosses' efforts.

Today's Militant Fighting Fund is organized in the same tradition, appealing to fellow workers and those who appreciate the paper's uncompromising efforts to speak in the interests of the working class and all others exploited by capital, here and around the world.

Keep your contributions coming in! You can do so online at the paper's website: www.themilitant.com.

Campaign to expand reach of 'Militant,' books, fund April 6 - May 28 (week three)

Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold	Fund quota	Received
UNITED STATES						
Albany	65	22	65	31	\$5,600	\$1,930
Atlanta	70	30	70	26	\$9,750	\$3,560
Chicago	85	36	110	55	\$11,400	\$5,944
Dallas	40	19	40	19	\$2,500	\$635
Lincoln	14	9	16	12	\$250	\$75
Los Angeles	85	42	185	148	\$10,800	\$2,660
Louisville	50	17	50	13	\$2,800	\$2,206
Miami	25	5	25	8	\$3,500	\$1,500
N. New Jersey	40	18	50	49	\$3,500	\$1,442
New York	80	27	80	55	\$14,000	\$3,269
Oakland	70	32	70	47	\$13,000	\$6,510
Philadelphia	25	10	25	9	\$3,000	\$500
Pittsburgh	15	3	15	0	\$1,200	\$0
Seattle	70	20	70	28	\$10,000	\$5,223
Twin Cities	35	11	35	14	\$4,750	\$2,360
Washington	40	12	40	21	\$5,000	\$2,177
Total U.S.	809	313	946	535	\$101,050	\$39,991
Prisoners	25	16	0	0	0	\$0
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	50	22	90	74	\$2,500	\$455
Manchester	35	17	45	29	\$1,300	\$161
Total U.K.	85	39	135	103	\$3,800	\$616
CANADA	70	25	80	33	\$8,200	\$1,287
NEW ZEALAND	20	7	20	8	\$3,400	\$1,765
AUSTRALIA	20	14	30	23	\$500	\$175
Total	1,029	414	1,211	702	\$116,950	\$43,834
SHOULD BE	1,050	452	1,050	452	\$115,000	\$49,450

— CALENDAR —

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Albert Woodfox tours against solitary, prison officials' abuse

BY SETH GALINSKY

After his release from the notorious Angola, Louisiana, prison after nearly 44 years in solitary confinement, Albert Woodfox has kept doing the same thing he had been doing behind bars — standing up for what he believes in. Woodfox is touring the country and the world speaking out against the savagery of the U.S. “justice” system and calling for an end to solitary confinement.

He is promoting his book *Solitary: My Story of Transformation and Hope*, which describes his imprisonment, political awakening, frame-up on charges of killing a guard and prison officials' failed attempt to break his spirit.

“I could have let the prison culture consume me,” Woodfox said in an April 25 phone interview with the *Militant*. “Instead, I was determined to be a better human being. To fight with strength and determination for a better cause.”

In *Solitary* Woodfox doesn't flinch from telling the truth about himself or the prison system. He recalls how he ended up in prison.

“I robbed people, scared them, threatened them, intimidated them. I stole from people who had almost nothing,” he wrote. “My people. Black people.”

While in prison in New York in 1970, he met members of the Black Panther Party who impressed him with their discipline and conduct. They told him that change was coming and individuals can make a difference. And he began reading. By the time he was on his way back to Louisiana “it was as if a light went on in a room inside me that I hadn't known existed,” Woodfox wrote.

Woodfox was sent back to Angola for armed robbery, where he helped set up a prison chapter of the Black Panthers together with fellow inmates Herman Wallace and Robert King.

“We were serving the Black community, but it went beyond that. We were concerned with oppressed *people*,” Woodfox told the *Militant*. “Not just oppressed Blacks and Hispanics.”

‘Blacks, whites have same oppressor’

At the time Angola prison was segregated. “The one area where Blacks and whites were allowed altogether was in sports,” he said. “We came over with the idea that we could have football games and use that to communicate with each other. We tried to show the white prisoners that we had a common enemy and a common oppressor and we had much more in common. We began to build bridges between Black and white and other minorities.”

Their political activities were not to the liking of prison authorities. When prison guard Brent Miller was stabbed to death in a cell on April 17, 1972, prison officials framed Woodfox and Wallace for the killing, even though they knew neither man had anything to do with it. Miller's widow, Leontine Rogers, came to the same conclusion and became a supporter of their fight for freedom.

King was also framed up for the killing of a fellow prisoner. Together they became known as the Angola 3. All three were found guilty in grossly unfair trials and placed in solitary for decades.

Woodfox credits books for helping to change his life. He read widely, from novels like *A Different Drummer* by William Melvin Kelley to Frantz

Fanon, Malcolm X, Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. “These books helped shape and change my way of looking at the world,” he said.

“They were motivating factors for writing *Solitary*,” he said. “I'm 72 years old. No matter how many speaking engagements I go on, it's still a limited number of people I can reach. The book allows me to reach hundreds of thousands, maybe more.”

Despite being in solitary, Woodfox, King and Herman kept organizing against abusive conditions and winning fellow prisoners to join in solidarity.

It was a fight to get books. “You should see how many administrative remedies I filed to get them to reverse capricious decisions,” he said. Books and newspapers were passed hand to hand.

Institutional racism is the threat

Woodfox won his freedom in February 2016. When asked about the biggest difference he saw in life outside prison now, compared to before he was sent to Angola, Woodfox says, “Technology. Other than that, racism still exists, it just isn't as brutal as when I left society. It's more subtle.”

“Individual racists are easier to combat and overcome,” he said. “But the institutional racism is the real threat.”

“They say this system is democracy,” Woodfox said. “Really it's all about class warfare. They have perfected a way to get people to fight against their own interests. This economic system divides everyone by race, gender, class and sexual orientation.”

Woodfox is pleased with the breadth of attendance at the meetings he has been speaking at around the country.

“King and I talked about the meetings,” he said. “There were a lot of questions the audience had that were never addressed.” They insisted that at each meeting there be time for the audience to join in. “It gave us a better understanding of how they see America and the world. There are a lot of very decent people who make up humanity, far more than not,” he said. “The desire for change is there.”

At every speaking engagement Woodfox describes the cruel nature of solitary confinement. “The way they impose solitary is arbitrary,” Woodfox

Philadelphia rally demands new trial for Abu-Jamal



Militant/Ruth Robinett

PHILADELPHIA — Dozens marched in Germantown here April 27 demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal. A former Black Panther and journalist, Abu-Jamal has been incarcerated for 37 years, much of it on death row. He has been fighting for a new trial, seeking to overturn his frame-up murder conviction in the 1981 shooting of Philadelphia cop Daniel Faulkner. Speaking is human rights fighter Ralph Pointer, who recently visited Abu-Jamal.

Between 1995 and 2012 the Pennsylvania Supreme Court denied four appeals by Abu-Jamal against his conviction. The court was presided over by former Philadelphia District Attorney Ron Castille. In 2002 federal Judge William Yohn overturned the death sentence hanging over Abu-Jamal.

In December 2018 Common Pleas Court Judge Leon Tucker ruled Abu-Jamal could renew his appeal because Castille refused to recuse himself from ruling on Abu-Jamal's four appeals. Tucker ruled this was a conflict of interest.

Current Philadelphia DA Larry Krasner initially announced he would appeal Tucker's ruling, claiming it would set a precedent affecting an unlimited number of convictions. Krasner said April 17 he had changed his mind after Tucker explained his ruling was limited to Abu-Jamal's particular case.

The April 27 action celebrated Krasner's decision and the new opening for Abu-Jamal to fight to win his freedom.

— OSBORNE HART

said. “There's no criteria for working your way out. There's nothing you can do to get out of the predicament.”

Some prison reform proposals, like one in New York, call for a 15-day limit for any stay in solitary. “I don't know where the 15 days comes from,” he said. “Anyone who's been in solitary, I don't think they would say 15 days.”

“Try staying in your bathroom or draw a 6-by-9-foot space in your living room for 23 hours,” he said. “You can have a TV, radio, all those things that we won through our resistance and hunger strikes.”

Woodfox knew about the 2013 hunger strike against solitary by 30,000 California prisoners, who forged unity between Black, Latino and Caucasian prisoners, including some who had once been part of racist groups. “What they did was just brilliant,” he said.

“Prison officials try to justify their inhuman treatment by demonizing prisoners,” he said. “The purpose of

their treatment is to break your spirit.”

“Neither prisoners nor security guards come from other planets,” he said. There are some individual guards “who don't treat prisoners like animals or degrade them. But the culture of abuse is so powerful it eats the individual up.”

Woodfox's U.S. tour continues. In May he will promote *Solitary* in England and in August in Australia. Don't miss your chance to hear him.

Hear Albert Woodfox

Sun., May 5, 5 p.m.

Freight & Salvage
Berkeley, Calif.

Tues., May 7, 6 p.m.

Underground Books
Sacramento, Calif.

Thurs., May 16, 7 p.m.

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Uber drivers call strike May 8 over pay cuts, work conditions

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

As the profit-seeking Uber bosses head toward their first public stock offering, hoping to raise a war chest of some \$10 billion, the company's drivers are planning a strike and public protests in seven cities May 8 over declining pay and poor working conditions. Drivers plan to turn off their apps for 12 hours, demanding higher wages, benefits, and respect in Chicago, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, San Diego, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

In Los Angeles the strike is targeting both Uber and fellow e-hail car outfit Lyft. The drivers are demanding that Uber immediately rescind its recent 25% per mile wage cut, and that both companies guarantee drivers a \$28 per hour minimum rate — or \$17 after expenses, according to the 4,200-member Rideshare Drivers United-L. A., which is organizing the protest.

The Los Angeles action follows a similar protest the group organized March 25 outside the company's headquarters there to oppose Uber's wage restructuring scheme.

After drivers in L.A. turn off their apps, they plan to picket at Los Angeles International Airport in the morning and afternoon, hold a noon rally, and have a family picnic from 5-7 that evening.

"We are striking both companies, as both are in a race to the bottom to impress their investors at the drivers' expense," Brian Dolber, from Rideshare Drivers United-L.A., told the press.

In March, Uber cut drivers' pay in Los Angeles from 80 to 60 cents per mile. Soon after Lyft joined in new attacks on drivers, ending "multipliers," which allowed some drivers to earn more than the base rate of 80 cents per mile.

The bosses are under pressure from investors to begin turning a profit. Uber's gig-economy owners say their "business model" is to forgo profits in order to crush their competitors and get rich. The investors — who advance money seeking immediate returns — are skeptical. Since Lyft bosses announced their IPO March 18, their stock has continued to fall.

"We want a living wage," San Francisco Uber driver Mostafa Maklad told Gizmodo website. "Most drivers living in San Francisco are forced to work at least 70-80 hours a week in order to survive in the city. Living expenses increase, gas prices increase, food expenses increase, everything is getting more expensive in order to live in San Francisco. We have to drive more and more, deal with health and stress problems, but Uber doesn't care."

Barbara Lloyd, a spokesperson for Chicago Rideshare Advocates, which is organizing the protest there, said drivers' rates have been cut about \$1.75 per mile since rideshare bosses began operating in the city. "This has forced many drivers into poverty," she said.

The bosses and investors agree that the road to profits has to come off the backs of drivers. Some get starry-eyed about a future where robot cabs will totally eliminate workers. Uber tries to justify wage cuts and other attacks on their drivers by telling them the taxicab



Militant/Thabo Ntweng

Uber drivers in Redondo Beach, California, March 25, during daylong strike against bosses' 25% per mile pay cut. Union of Uber, Lyft, taxicab and other drivers needed for united struggle.

drivers' competition is the problem. Cab barn bosses tell taxi drivers their problem is Uber and other e-hail workers. Nine drivers in New York City alone have committed suicide in the last couple years confronted by mounting debts.

"Drivers in New York City need to look to solidarity and a united fight for

one union for all drivers," says a statement by Seth Galinsky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for public advocate. "When that day comes, workers across the five boroughs and far beyond will side with the drivers, organize solidarity in their fight against their exploiters, and look for ways to emulate their example."

Washington steps up war threats, as coup attempt fails

Continued from front page

to be defecting instead announced they backed the government. The next day, Guaidó and defenders of the government held competing rallies.

President Donald Trump and other administration officials threatened the government and people of Cuba. "If Cuban Troops and Militia do not immediately CEASE military and other operations for the purpose of causing death and destruction to the Constitution of Venezuela, a full and complete embargo, together with highest-level sanctions, will be placed on the island of Cuba," Trump threatened in an April 30 tweet. "Hopefully, all Cuban soldiers will promptly and peacefully return to their island!"

But the U.S. government knows full well that the 20,000 Cuban internationalist volunteers in Venezuela are overwhelmingly doctors, nurses, sports and dance instructors and teach-

ers. They are respected by many working people for working in some of the poorest neighborhoods and most isolated regions of Venezuela.

Washington has carried out an embargo of Cuba — sometimes tighter, sometimes looser — since soon after working people overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959. The U.S. rulers — no matter what party is in the White House — have never forgiven the Cuban people for bringing to power a government of workers and farmers.

The White House recently announced measures tightening the embargo, including a cap on remittances by Cuban-Americans to relatives on the island and allowing U.S. citizens to sue over properties expropriated during the revolution. Washington also announced it will impose as yet unspecified restrictions on travel to Cuba.

A "complete" embargo could only be enforced through naval action, which

would be considered an act of war by any nation on the planet targeted by such military action. The White House hasn't yet taken any steps to implement this threat, however — and it's in the class interests of working people in Cuba, the U.S. and worldwide to make sure Washington never does.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued statements condemning the blatant U.S. violation of Venezuelan sovereignty and its lies and threats against Cuba.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that "military action is possible. If that's what's required, that's what the United States will do." White House National Security Adviser John Bolton told MSNBC that "all options are open" in Venezuela, as did Gen. Joseph Dunford Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan canceled a trip to Europe to remain at the Pentagon.

It's not just Trump's Republican allies who are backing the threats. Democratic presidential candidate and former Vice President Joe Biden said April 30, "The U.S. must stand with the National Assembly & Guaidó in their efforts to restore democracy." Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called on Maduro "to acknowledge the will of the Venezuelan people."

The governments and people of Cuba and Venezuela have had close relations since 1998 when Hugo Chávez won election as Venezuelan president in the midst of a rise in struggles by working people. Thousands of Cuban internationalists have aided social programs there, and Caracas has provided Cuba with inexpensive oil.

The U.S.-backed opposition, which attempted a coup against Chávez in 2002, has been banking on the deep economic and social crisis in Venezuela to win support for overthrowing the government. They are focused on trying to turn the military officer corps.

The crisis has been exacerbated by the policies of the Chávez and Maduro governments, which tried to "regulate" capitalist relations, as many in the state

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Denounce Jew-hatred, a threat to all workers

The following is from a statement released by Dennis Richter, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Los Angeles City Council District 12, at an April 29 vigil in Poway, California, where thousands gathered to respond to the deadly attack on the Chabad of Poway synagogue there.

The Socialist Workers Party condemns the anti-Semitic assault that resulted in the killing of Lori Kaye and wounding of three others at the Chabad of Poway synagogue April 27. Working people and the entire labor movement should speak out against this attack, and offer solidarity with the Jewish community there.

John Earnest, who was arrested for the attack, reportedly wrote an anti-Semitic manifesto. In it he stated that Jesus Christ and Adolf Hitler, as well as the Pittsburgh Tree of Life synagogue and Christchurch New Zealand mosque shooters were his role models. He claimed he was also the attacker who attempted to burn down the mosque in

nearby Escondido last month.

There is no broad expansion of rightist or fascist currents in the United States today. There is less racism, less anti-immigrant sentiment among working people today than at any time in U.S. history.

But this kind of Jew-hatred, and its murderous consequences, rise to the surface in times of crisis under capitalism, as class tensions sharpen. The scapegoating of Jews for economic and social problems is a deadly threat to the working class. It is used to turn working people away from challenging the roots of the carnage we face — the dog-eat-dog private-profit system that Democrats and Republicans work to uphold.

The owners of industry and finance don't feel the need to turn to the goons and thugs of fascist gangs to preserve their class rule today. They continue to rely on their Democratic and Republican parties, and the two-party shell game, to keep workers and others picking between "lesser evils." Much of today's anti-Semitism comes from the

middle-class left, forces whose opposition to Israel carries over into broader Jew-hatred.

History has shown capitalists will use Jew-hatred and fascist thuggery in increasingly organized and deadly ways as the decay and crisis of their system deepens. Attacks against Jews by isolated rightist outfits and individuals, like Earnest, will grow if not countered by the working class and its organizations.

Socialist Workers Party candidates campaign across the country, uniting in struggle with anyone being scapegoated and victimized — Jews, Muslims and immigrants. We oppose any attempts to use the killing in Poway to promote the death penalty. Our candidates advance a course to unify the working class and our allies in action, on the road to taking political power into our own hands and begin organizing society in the interests of the vast majority.

Along those lines we urge working people to join in fighting Jew-hatred and anti-Semitic attacks wherever and whenever they occur.

Kurdistan union leader: Workers faced years of tyranny, war

BY STEVE PENNER

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region, Iraq — “Workers here have faced decades of tyranny, war and terrorism,” Hangaw Abdullah Khan, president of the Kurdistan United Workers’ Union (KUWU), said at an April 4 meeting with a delegation of leaders of the Socialist Workers Party of the United States and the Communist Leagues of the United Kingdom and Canada.

“It’s difficult to know what to do when you face these kinds of conditions,” he said. “It makes it more difficult for workers to fight for their rights.” Abdullah Khan was referring specifically to the decadeslong tyranny of Saddam Hussein, including the murderous attacks on the Kurdish people, and the 1980-88 war the dictatorship launched against Iran, in which hundreds of thousands were killed on both sides.

Also the U.S. imperialist rulers’ two brutal wars against Iraq in 1991 and 2003, with a decade of economic sanctions in between. Then Washington occupied the country from 2003 to 2011. The Iraqi people have lived through a campaign of terror by sectarian militias over the last decade and a half, as well as ongoing encroachments on Iraqi and Kurdish national sovereignty at the hands of both Washington and the bourgeois clerical regime in Tehran.

Under these conditions, oil production and refining, the major source of export earnings, have been set back; many industries have been shut down or destroyed; and construction is at a standstill. Hundreds of thousands of displaced workers, many of them young, are now casual workers on the streets, or have joined one or another militia to find employment.

More than 1.12 million refugees have fled to the Kurdistan Region from other parts of Iraq, including Sunni Arabs, Yazidis and Christians, as well as 250,000 refugees from Syria, 21,000 from Turkey and 13,000 from Iran.

Unions in Kurdistan Region

The KUWU is the main union federation in the Kurdistan Region organizing workers in private industry. In addition to Abdullah Khan, other union leaders at the meeting were KUWU executive board members Houree Toufeq, Nabeel Roal Mulhem and Abed Al Qader Ahmed; Saber Othman and Omar Ismaail, president and

vice president of the Erbil branch of the federation; and Maghdeed Ahmed, the founding leader of the Erbil branch and its most senior member.

They met with Steve Clark, a National Committee member of the Socialist Workers Party and editorial director of Pathfinder Press, which had a booth at the Erbil International Book Fair at the time; Alyson Kennedy and Osborne Hart, the U.S. SWP’s 2016 candidates for president and vice president; and Ögmundur Jónsson and Steve Penner from the Communist Leagues in the United Kingdom and Canada.

“The unions in Iraqi Kurdistan belonged to Iraqi federations until 1991,” Maghdeed Ahmed said. “They became independent at the time of the 1991 Kurdish uprising that led to the establishment of what is now the Kurdistan Regional Government.”

Two separate Kurdish union federations were formed, each affiliated with one of the two main capitalist parties here, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. In 2010 the unions united in a single federation. KUWU organizes workers in oil and electricity production, agriculture, metalworks, construction, transport, textile and garment, and service jobs.

Ahmed said that in 1987 Saddam Hussein ordered the dissolution of government workers unions, declaring “government employees weren’t workers, they were ‘officials.’” Since then government workers have not belonged to unions.” According to the U.N., some two-thirds of KRG residents are on the public payroll, either as government employees or pensioners. The U.N. estimates that of those in the workforce 45 percent of male workers and 75 percent of women workers are employed by the government.

“If the unions want to strike or demonstrate they need government authorization,” Ismaail said. “The unions organize May Day demonstrations each year where workers present their



Participants in April 4 meeting in Erbil of Kurdistan United Workers’ Union and leaders of Socialist Workers Party of U.S. and Communist Leagues of U.K. and Canada. **Standing from left:** Hangaw Abdullah Khan, KUWU president; Steve Clark, SWP; Steve Penner, CL, Canada; Maghdeed Ahmed, Erbil branch, KUWU; Osborne Hart, Alyson Kennedy, SWP 2016 candidates for vice president and president; Nazem Qoda, Iraqi Communist Party; Saber Othman, KUWU executive board; Ögmundur Jónsson, CL, U.K.; Omar Ismaail, Erbil branch, KUWU. **Front row from left:** Houree Toufeq and Abed Al Qader Ahmed, KUWU executive board.

demands to the government.”

This year KUWU marched April 30. Kurdistan 24 TV quoted KUWU leader Saber Othman saying the union is demanding changes to KRG labor law better protecting the rights of workers. A May Day action the next day was organized by the Kurdistan Communist Party, Kurdistan Toilers’ Party, Iraqi Communist Association of Peshmerga and others.

Kurdistan 24 reported that Kurdish construction worker Pers Safeen Osman, 28, was killed May 1 when a wall collapsed on him. Over the past four years, 25 workers have died on the job and 52 have been injured, according to Arif Hito, director general of Labor and Social Affairs in the KRG.

In March 2018 thousands of government employees — teachers, health care workers, doctors and others — went on strike for several days in Erbil, Duhok, Halabja and Sulaymaniyah provinces. They were protesting wage cuts of up to half or more since 2016 by both the Iraqi central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. In addition, the KRG had been paying them every few months rather than monthly. This was the first time the strikes extended to Erbil, the capital. Protesters were met by thousands of police and some were beaten or jailed.

Independence from capitalist state

The KUWU leaders were interested in the state of the U.S. labor movement. Clark said that Socialist Workers Party members work in unionized industries such as rail freight, as well as in large retail stores where the fight for a union lies ahead.

“The unions in the U.S. have been greatly weakened as a result of the union officials’ class-collaborationist course refusing to organize and fight unconditionally for the interests of the working class and its allies,” Clark said. Unionization of workers for private employers has fallen from around one-third in the 1950s to little more than 6 percent today, roughly the level it was at the end of World War I.

“The fight to organize the unorganized is crucial,” Clark said. “It’s tied to the battle to end the labor officialdom’s subordination of the unions to the boss-

es, their parties, and their government. And to the fight to end the officials’ political support for U.S. imperialism’s foreign and military policy — and its bloody and devastating wars.”

“In the 1930s the working class in the U.S. made its biggest advances in the fight to build industrial unions,” Clark said. “But those advances were undermined from the outset by the fact that on the political level the unions remained tied to the bosses’ parties. The policy of top union officials, as well as the Communist and Socialist Parties, was to support the bosses’ parties, mainly the Democratic Party. They continue to do so to this day.”

One meeting participant asked if the union leadership in the U.S. is elected by the membership or appointed. “In the United Mine Workers union that I belonged to for many years, it took a big battle in the 1960s and 1970s to win the right to vote on district and local union officials, and on our contracts,” said Kennedy, who worked as an underground miner for 14 years. That was closely tied to a far-reaching rank-and-file miners’ fight to strengthen the union so it could defend workers’ interests, such as establishment of union safety committees in the mines that could halt work in face of dangerous conditions. They also helped win coal community health clinics to treat miners and prevent deaths from black lung disease.

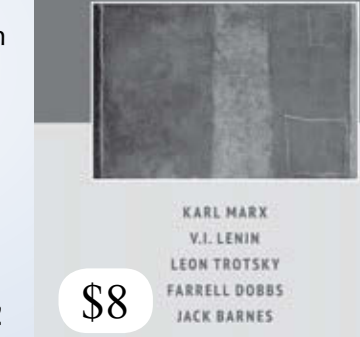
“One of the big challenges today is
Continued on facing page

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Tribunes of the People and the Trade Unions



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workers employed at nonunion sites.

Union membership in New York’s construction industry has dropped from 90 percent in the 1970s to less than 31 percent today. Union officials say it’s hard to organize because many of these workers don’t have legal papers, but they don’t do anything to fight for amnesty and legalization as part of organizing them.

Vlad Restoration, the contractor Salinas was working for, was sued last year by six demolition workers for \$290,000 over unpaid overtime, a suit the bosses finally settled for less than half that amount. The building where Salinas worked was by the site of a crane collapse in 2008 that killed six workers and a pedestrian.

Two days after Salinas’ death, Erik Mendoza, 23, fell 13 stories to his death while working on the roof of a luxury building in Brooklyn Heights. He and another worker had been placing bricks underneath the building’s water tower. It was Mendoza’s first week on that job.

On April 13, 34-year-old Gregory Echevarria, a crane rigger, was crushed to death when part of a 16-wheeler crane he was helping to assemble came crashing down on him at a SoHo construction site near the Holland Tunnel.

The company he worked for, Cranes Express Inc., brags on its website it is “the largest non-union crane company in NYC.” Since July seven complaints have been filed against the company, including over unsafe conditions, according to Department of Buildings records. In 2016 two construction workers were killed when a beam being hoisted into place by a Cranes Express-owned crane fell four stories at a construction site in Queens.

Construction most dangerous job

Construction, followed by transportation and agriculture, are the most dangerous jobs across the country. Nine hundred seventy-one construction workers were killed in 2017, reported the AFL-CIO in “Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect” published this April.

Overall, 5,147 workers lost their lives from traumatic injuries on the job in 2017, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported.

That means each and every day an average of 14 workers in the U.S. die from injuries on the job. And an estimated 95,000 more die each year from diseases caused by conditions where they work. Put together, about 275 workers die each day due to job injuries and work-related

illnesses, the AFL-CIO reported.

With “widespread under-reporting of workplace injuries” by bosses, “the true toll is estimated,” the report says, to be “7.0 million to 10.5 million injuries and illnesses a year.”

For decades, union officials have told workers they can bank on Democratic Party candidates, or occasionally Republicans, to defend the unions, instead of organizing and leading workers in a sustained fight against the attacks of the bosses and the government.

Today, union membership in private industry — where the large majority of injuries and deaths occur — has declined to 6.4 percent of the workforce. The challenge facing working people is to build and transform the unions with the power to ensure safety is enforced on the job.

This was won and implemented by the United Mine Workers union several decades ago. In the late 1960s and ’70s miners led a revolution in their union that put the fight for safety and against deadly black lung disease at the forefront. In a series of popular strikes and social battles they forced the coal bosses to accept union safety committees in the mines with the power to shut production — power they used — to enforce safety.

Then workers need to expand workers control over all aspects of production, so the eyes of the workers penetrate into all the open and hidden workings of the capitalist economy.

Winning workers to union

There are thousands of construction workers — union and nonunion — working across the street from each other and often on the same worksites in this city. Seth Galinsky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City public advocate, and Janet Post visited sites at Penn Station and the massive Hudson Yards construction project April 17 to discuss the on-the-job safety crisis and the need for workers to be organized in unions.

“Without a union, there is pressure to work faster and then there’s more accidents,” one 20-year worker from Ecuador, who is a member of Carpenters union Local 1556, told Galinsky. Most of the workers at this construction site are nonunion, he said.

“No worker should die on the job because of unsafe conditions. That’s why we need to reach out and organize those workers into the union,” Galinsky said.

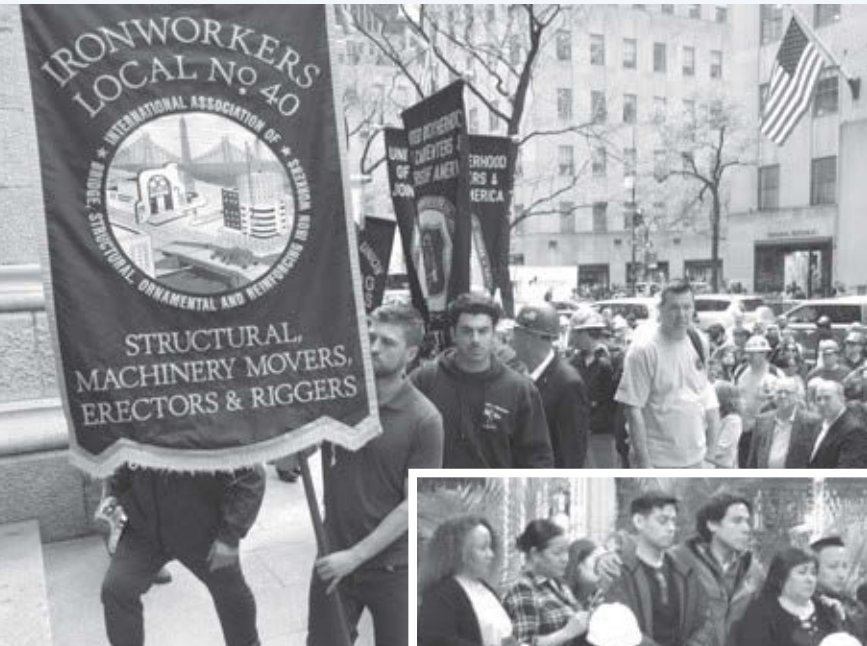
Another Latino worker heading to the same worksite told Galinsky, “We would like to be in a union, but no one has approached us.”

Across the street, James Hayes, a shop steward from Cement and Concrete Laborers Local 20, was laying a foundation at Hudson Yards. He agreed the unions haven’t done enough to try and organize.

“But we know that some of those workers,” he said, pointing to the non-union job site across the street, “have lost their jobs just trying to talk to us.”

“If the union went to those workers and said we don’t care where you were born, we’re going to fight for amnesty so that you can’t be deported and we can fight together to stand up to the bosses,” Galinsky said, “and organized a real fight, including shutting down any site that’s unsafe, workers would flock to the union.”

NY mass honors construction workers killed on the job



Militant photos by Brian Williams

NEW YORK — Hundreds of construction workers participated in a “Hard Hat” mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral here April 25 to honor workers killed on the job over the past year. Sixteen hard hats were placed on empty chairs on stage to commemorate workers who lost their lives since last year’s Workers Memorial Day — two union members and 14 nonunion. Inset, family members during ceremony on stage with the hard hats of their fallen relatives. Above, workers march into the cathedral.

“Safety is a big issue for us. What we do is dangerous,” Collins Greene, a member of Ironworkers Local 46, told the *Militant*. “We work at heights with steel and reinforcing steel so foundations can be strong.”

“While most deaths are of nonunion workers, we are all workers and all the same,” said John Carroll, member of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 3, who has worked in construction for 30 years. “Construction is a dangerous industry,” he said. It’s important to “shine the light on exploitation of nonunion workers.” Rev. Brian Jordan presided over the ceremony. “We as workers, both union and nonunion, are truly indebted to him for bringing to light the atrocities that are taking place by unscrupulous and greedy developers,” Carroll told the *Militant* after the program.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

Workers faced years of tyranny, war

Continued from previous page

for the unions to defend the rights of nonunion workers,” she said. “There are millions of undocumented immigrant workers in the U.S. — especially from Mexico. But the union officials refuse to organize them into the unions and mobilize union power to fight for an amnesty that would lift the threat of deportation from their shoulders and give them full legal rights and equality.”

Ahmed noted that in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq “there are thousands of workers from Bangladesh, India, Iran, Turkey and elsewhere — some legal, some not — but only 5,000 have contracts. The 17,000 ‘irregular’ immigrant workers have no rights and face particularly bad conditions. But the unions defend all workers.”

History of ‘external domination’

Abdullah Khan said that “the modern history of Iraq has been one of external domination — first by British imperialism, then by the Soviet Union, and now by U.S. imperialism.”

Toufeq related an experience that vividly showed the political price paid by working people in Kurdistan and Iraq for the policies toward the Saddam regime by Moscow and the world movement it used to advance the Soviet government’s diplomatic needs and the privileged social layers whose perks and life styles it acted to defend from all comers. When Toufeq and other Communist Party cadres had been fighting the dictatorship in the mountains in the 1980s, they

were attacked by Soviet-supplied helicopters firing Soviet missiles. Peasants asked them, how that could be? “You’re Communists, and we’re being attacked by Russian helicopters!”

The Soviet government supported the Saddam regime, Toufeq said, “but Communists here followed our own independent policy” toward the dictatorship. “It was very hard to answer the peasants. Working people are very confused after what they’ve gone through the past 40 years,” he said.

Toufeq said they appreciated sharing experiences with workers from other countries. “We all agree on organizing the working class. But the challenge is knowing what to do in each situation.”

Clark presented the KUWU leaders with Pathfinder books that explain the program and views of the Socialist Workers Party, including *Washington’s Assault on Iraq: Opening Guns of World War III*; the newly published *Tribunes of the People and the Trade Unions*; *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?*; and *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, all by Jack Barnes, as well as *In Defense of the US Working Class* by Mary-Alice Waters. In response to a question as to whether he thought socialism was possible in the U.S., Clark pointed to *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* by Waters and said, “Yes. This book explains why.”

“We consider building solidarity with Kurdish unions in the U.S., the U.K., and Canada as well as vice versa to be very important,” Clark said.

— SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT — US hands off Venezuela! Hands off Cuba!

This call to action was issued May 2 by Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor in Dallas. Kennedy was the SWP candidate for president in 2016.

The Socialist Workers Party calls on working people in the United States and beyond to initiate and join with others to organize protests, forums and other actions demanding an immediate halt to Washington's dangerous violations of Venezuela's sovereignty and war threats against the Cuban Revolution.

We condemn President Donald Trump's threat to impose a "full and complete embargo" on Cuba for the Cuban people's solidarity with Venezuela. If such an embargo were acted on, it would be recognized the world over as tantamount to an act of war. The warning itself marks an escalation of Washington's decadeslong efforts, under Democratic and Republican White Houses and Congresses alike, to punish Cuban workers and farmers for making a socialist revolution on U.S. imperialism's doorstep.

The threats are bipartisan, with Nancy Pelosi, Joseph Biden and many other leading Democratic Party voices joining in the warlike drumbeat.

The White House threats to slap further economic and financial sanctions on Cuba build on hostile U.S. moves already taken in recent weeks. These include tightened restrictions on travel by U.S. citizens to the island, as well as on Cuban-Americans sending remittances to relatives. Washington has announced plans to begin implementing provisions of the Clinton-era Helms-Burton Act enabling U.S. citizens whose properties were taken by Cuba's workers and farmers during the sweeping land reform and other measures to restore their national patrimony to file lawsuits demanding compensation.

The U.S. administration's shameless claim that it

is acting on behalf of "the Venezuelan people" — and that some 20,000 Cuban troops are running the country today — is known to be a bald-faced lie by millions of workers and peasants in Venezuela. Many of them can testify firsthand to the selfless conduct, humane treatment and class solidarity by thousands of Cuban medical personnel, teachers and other internationalist volunteers.

The U.S. rulers' open and bipartisan support of provocations by bourgeois opposition figures such as Juan Guaidó, Leopoldo López and others, and Washington's menacing declarations that "all options" remain open, run the risk of turning the economic, social and political crisis in that country into a bloodbath and demoralizing blow to working people there.

Members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party and SWP candidates in the 2019 election campaigns are joining with others in picket lines, protest meetings, and other actions. We're reaching out to working people, trade unionists, and youth in cities, towns and farming areas to oppose Washington's attacks on Venezuela and Cuba. As we do so, we're bringing with us the SWP's working-class program — in books by party leaders, the *Militant* and our election campaign literature — to explain and discuss with those we're meeting and fighting alongside.

Only the people of Venezuela have the right to decide their own future. Only they have the capacity to forge a working-class leadership that can chart a course out of the devastating capitalist crisis facing them. Oppose U.S. imperialism's never-ending efforts to turn back the socialist revolution fought for and conquered some 60 years ago by Cuban workers and farmers and the communist leadership forged by Fidel Castro and others.

U.S. hands off Venezuela! U.S. hands off Cuba!

As Washington, Beijing talk, rivalry deepens

Continued from front page

The Chinese rulers hosted their second Belt and Road forum in Beijing April 26-27, attended by over 5,000 delegates and leaders of 37 countries from across the globe. Beijing's goal was to defend its massive infrastructure plans for Eurasia from criticism.

At the same time, the Chinese rulers indirectly flagged to their U.S. counterparts a willingness — rhetorically at least — to address Washington's interests in their trade dispute. President Xi Jinping projected increasing Chinese imports, protecting intellectual property rights, keeping the Chinese currency stable and allowing more foreign investment alongside Chinese capital.

A capitalist crisis, with ups and downs, has wracked world economic relations since the 2008 global financial crash. National antagonisms among all the rival capitalist classes are sharpening. The global order, dominated by the U.S. rulers for decades since their victory in the second interimperialist world war, is being shaken. Washington remains the dominant economic, political and military power but is in decline.

Like the yearly talkfest in Davos, Switzerland, there was little of real substance at the Belt and Road forum in Beijing. The Chinese rulers were showcasing their modern version of the old trading route, the Silk Road. It links China with the rest of Asia, Europe and beyond by large-scale projects in rail, roads and bridges, ports and other infrastructure, funded by state-backed Chinese banks. This is at the heart of Beijing's push to elbow Washington aside and become the prime trader with, investor in, and lender to the rest of the world.

Reacting to criticisms of Beijing's patent self-interest and "debt diplomacy," Xi talked of a "global partnership for connectivity." People's Bank of China Gov. Ui Gang said the central bank would "build an open, market-oriented financing and investment system."

Xi promised "green" projects and a "debt sustainability framework." After all this pious blather, the Chinese rulers worked hard behind the scenes to ink lucrative deals with visiting government leaders. They succeeded in getting \$64 billion in new projects.

Representatives of the Trump administration and

others have criticized Beijing's scheme as being a "debt trap" for less developed countries. The rival governments of the United States, India and Australia, wary of Beijing's intentions, didn't attend.

Debt is rising across the developing world, a consequence of exploitative trade and financial relations drawing wealth from these countries into the coffers of the imperialist powers, still headed by Washington.

Some governments in Asia and Africa have halted projects inspired and funded by Beijing. Washington works behind the scenes to encourage this. From Pakistan to Bangladesh and Malaysia, governments are cutting back on ambitious plans that impose too high a debt burden. The loans are "collateralized" against existing assets or territory that will fall under Chinese control in the event of any default. In 2017, the government of Sri Lanka had to hand over control of the Beijing-constructed Hambantota Port to a Chinese company after defaulting on loan repayments.

The allure of plentiful Chinese investment for the new Silk Road has further widened divisions among capitalist rulers in Europe. Some are concerned that China has become a "systemic rival," while others, like the Italian and many eastern European governments, have signed onto Belt and Road plans. But even so, Germany, France and Britain sent ministers to the Beijing meeting. The city of London hopes to become a financial center for Belt and Road investments.

The European rulers, beset by fears of Brexit and other simmering rifts, are belatedly realizing the changes to the order of the world capitalist system. As Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Borrell Fontelles told the *South China Morning Post* April 24, "China is no longer a developing country but a world power."

In an April 28 *Financial Times* article titled "China, the US and Trade in a Dog-Eat-Dog World," Edward Luce writes that the trade talks between Washington and Beijing are meant to overhaul economic relations between two "deeply entwined giants." If trade talks in coming weeks successfully close a deal, he says, it will provide a respite, but it would come at the expense of future stability both between the two countries' rulers, and across the world.

Washington threats

Continued from page 5

and ruling party apparatus enriched themselves. Today there are widespread shortages of food and medicine and runaway inflation. Millions of working people and those in the middle classes have fled the country.

Washington is pressuring Moscow to get Maduro to resign. The May 1 *New York Times* cited a State Department report that Pompeo told Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov that Moscow's friendly relations with the Maduro government are "destabilizing" for the "U.S.-Russia bilateral relationship."

Russia's state-owned oil company has heavily invested in Venezuela's oil industry, including billions of dollars in loans.

Washington is not holding out any offer of friendlier relations with Havana, regardless of how the struggle unfolds in Venezuela, and working people in Cuba know that.

"Millions of Cubans took to the streets on Wednesday [May 1] in protest over new sanctions imposed on the Caribbean island by the Trump administration and U.S. efforts to topple the government of socialist ally Venezuela," Reuters reported.

Fight 'Militant' ban

Continued from front page

solitary confinement in the notorious Angola, Louisiana, prison.

Woodfox chuckled when he learned that the article reporting on his meetings in New York presenting his new book was banned, and the reason given. "I've never preached violence," he said by phone April 23. "The violence always came from the prison administration and guards trying to stop us from organizing and exposing what was going on."

On issue 17 which articles upset prison officials is unclear. The front page has articles on protests in Sudan, on protests for amnesty for immigrants in the U.S., a strike by Stop & Shop workers in New England, a successful fight to overturn a ban on used books in Washington state prisons and gains won in the fight against racism by the Cuban Revolution.

One prisoner wrote us to say he is filing an appeal to get the ban overturned. "The prison system fears what the *Militant* is exposing about the government as well as the prison system in America," he wrote.

Last year, Florida authorities banned seven issues in just one 10-week stretch. After the *Militant* won support for its fight against the bans from the National Coalition Against Censorship, the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, PEN America, Amnesty International and other organizations, prison authorities backed down. Almost all the bans were overturned.

But at least one prisoner in Florida informed the *Militant* that he has not received a single issue of the paper for months.

The *Militant's* lawyer, David Goldstein, has filed a notice of appeal.

The *Militant* is calling on its supporters everywhere to get union activists and officials, coworkers, church groups, civil liberties organizations, student clubs and others to send letters opposing this latest round of unconstitutional censorship.

"The more they censor and block the *Militant*," *Militant* editor John Studer said April 30, "the more respect we earn from those who are incarcerated."

"Prisoners deserve respect and dignity. We see prisoners as fellow workers who have the right to read material of their choosing and to form their own opinions, to be part of politics and the world," Studer said. "And they know that we won't back down defending both their rights and our own."

Join fight against prison censorship!

Get out the word: Distribute *Militant* articles on this fight.

Get support statements from unions, churches and defenders of political rights. Send to: themilitant@mac.com

Send checks to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018, for "Prisoners Rights Fight." **Or contribute online at themilitant.com**